

8.2

READING

Gapped text and gap fill

I can understand the structure of an article using contextual, grammatical and lexical clues.

1 SPEAKING Look at the photos and discuss the questions.

- 1 What are these celebrities famous for?
- 2 Judging by the photos, what do they do for humanitarian causes?

2 Read the article and answer the questions in your notebook.

- 1 In what way are celebrities useful to organisations like the United Nations?
- 2 What concern is raised about the strategy of enlisting celebrity support?
- 3 How does the UN deal with that concern?

3.18

UN Thanks Its Lucky Stars

In 1945, fifty-one countries formed the United Nations with the aim of maintaining international peace and security and promoting social progress. Today, nearly every nation in the world belongs to the intergovernmental organisation. Most of us have heard about UN peacekeeping missions and humanitarian assistance. But the many other ways the UN affects all our lives are not always so well known.

The organisation is central to global efforts to solve the many problems that challenge humanity. Day in, day out, the UN and its affiliated agencies work to promote respect for human rights, protect the environment, fight disease and reduce poverty. ¹ ? Danny Kaye, an actor and comedian popular in the 1950s, showed how to raise the organisation's status by accepting the honorary title of Goodwill Ambassador awarded to him by the Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 1954. What qualifies a singer, an actor or an athlete to represent a UN agency? And what good can celebrities really do? Fame has some clear benefits in certain roles. Celebrities attract attention, so they are in a position to focus the world's eyes on the agency's work both in their own countries and abroad. They can use their influence and fame to help spread awareness and raise funds for its campaigns. ² ? That is why the UN's priority has been to find superstars who have a track record of involvement in charitable causes and can represent the organisation in a way that wouldn't cheapen the brand.

One private consultant who finds 'high-level supporters' for the UN and other charities admits that the public and the media have the right to be cynical about celebrities getting involved in good causes – after all, the relationship may seem calculated and publicity-hungry. ³ ? And in each case, a celebrity's association with the organisation comes about because they have already demonstrated their dedication. Without them, it would be a much harder job to gain public attention. Few global celebrities have done more to help raise the profile of a UN agency than Angelina Jolie. Her interest in humanitarian affairs began back in 2000 when she went to Cambodia to film the adventure movie *Tomb Raider*. Named a Goodwill Ambassador in 2001, Jolie has travelled to some of the remotest regions of the world to highlight the plight of refugees and inspire others to help. She still creates their greatest source of web hits. ⁴ ? With her help, the UN Environment Programme hopes to make environmental action 'a lifestyle choice'.



Shakira, a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador



Leonardo DiCaprio

However, it was only once actor Leonardo DiCaprio, ponytailed and dressed in a smart suit, had appeared at the UN climate summit in 2014 to call for action that the programme achieved spectacular success. The star of *Titanic* and *The Wolf of Wall Street* has long been active on the climate front through his philanthropic foundation, and officials say they were impressed by his knowledge of the issues. The video of his speech has been watched by more than 1.5 million viewers – an all-time record for a UN video – while his tweets and retweets from the summit reached his 11.3 million followers. ⁵ ? So what is the verdict? Should celebrities lend their names to humanitarian causes? Do they have a unique ability to reach millions of people, many of whom may not normally be engaged? Or does celebrity endorsement trivialise the causes they support even if they are doing it for the best of reasons?